

# The Indiana

A Magazine Exploring Indiana History

# Historian



*Indianapolis, the capital*



# Focus

**Errata:** *The Indiana Historian*, March 1996, page 8. In paragraph four, the second sentence should read “*Italic type indicates TIH editorial entries.*”

**The Indiana Historian**  
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*The Indiana Historian* provides resources and models for the study of local history to encourage Indiana's citizens of all ages to become engaged with the history of their communities and the state of Indiana.

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Cover illustration: This painting, by English artist Thomas B. Glessing, circa 1872-1873, supposedly represents Treasurer of State Samuel Merrill arriving in Indianapolis with the state records and treasury. See pages 12-13.

Glessing lived in Indianapolis from 1859 until 1873. The painting was first reproduced in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, September 26, 1874. An engraving was made for the book published by Robinson, reproduced here. The painting, and its companion used in the March 1996 *TIH*, reportedly hung in an Indianapolis high school and were eventually destroyed because of significant damage.

From: *Picturesque Indianapolis* (Indianapolis: J.R. Robinson Publishers, 1890).

This issue concludes our commemoration of the 175th anniversary of the founding of Indianapolis.

Part 1, in the March 1996 issue, ended with the January 6, 1821 act that named the town and appointed commissioners to lay it out.

This issue covers the beginnings of Indianapolis and Marion County. It closes with the arrival of state government to the new capital in the fall of 1824.

On page 3, the commissioners are introduced, with a focus on Christopher Harrison.

On page 4, the surveying and platting of the town is covered. Alexander Ralston's 1821 plat of

the town is presented on page 5.

On pages 6-8, the sale of land in Indianapolis in October 1821 is examined. On page 9, many of the early residents are introduced.

The organization of Marion County is covered on pages 10-11.

On pages 12-13, there is an account of the move of the critical parts of Indiana's state government from Corydon to Indianapolis.

"Behind the Scenes," on page 14, presents some personal elements of historical research.

Page 15, as usual, contains bibliography and resources.

The back cover provides a map showing the movement of early Indianapolis' settlers.

## Founding Indianapolis

- 1820** — January 11—An act "to select and locate a site for the permanent seat" of state government.
- 1820** — May 22-June 7—Site commissioners meet, select site, and prepare report for General Assembly.
- 1820** — November 29—Site commissioners submit report to General Assembly.
- 1821** — January 6—Act to appoint commissioners to lay off town, name it Indianapolis, and authorize land sales.
- 1821** — January 8—Memorial to U.S. Congress from General Assembly to route National Road through Indianapolis.
- 1821** — January 9—Act to appoint justices of the peace for Indianapolis.
- 1821** — April—Indianapolis commissioners to meet; only Christopher Harrison comes.
- 1821** — Spring—Commissioner Harrison hires Elias P. Fordham and Alexander Ralston to survey and plat Indianapolis.
- 1821** — October 8—Sale of lands in Indianapolis begins.
- 1821** — November 28—Act legalizes Harrison's actions as commissioner.
- 1821** — December—Alexander Ralston plat of Indianapolis printed.



# + The commissioners and the agent

The act approved on January 6, 1821 provided for the appointment of three commissioners to lay out the town of Indianapolis and an agent to oversee the sale of lots. Christopher Harrison, James W. Jones, and Samuel P. Booker were chosen commissioners. General John Carr was named agent for the sale of lots.

The act gave very specific instructions on how to plat the town and how to sell lots in the town. The commissioners were to meet in April 1821 to begin their assignment.

Christopher Harrison was the only commissioner who appeared at the appointed time

and place. He decided to forge ahead and fulfill his duties. He hired surveyors Alexander Ralston and Elias P. Fordham to plat the town. He hired Benjamin I. Blythe as clerk. He oversaw the management of the sale of lots in October 1821 after the town had been platted.

The General Assembly, in a November 28, 1821 act, legalized his actions working as the lone commissioner.

Sources: Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis*; Nowland, *Early Reminiscences*; *Laws of Indiana, 1820-21*; the January 6, 1821 act is summarized on page 13 of the March 1996 *TIH*.

## Christopher Harrison

Harrison, who was born in Maryland, was wealthy and well-educated. He moved to Indiana in 1807 near Hanover, where he lived on a high bluff for seven years as a recluse, having (as reported by Dunn) lost his true love to another man.

In 1815, he moved to Salem where he opened a store and became an active participant in his community.

In 1816, he ran on the ticket with Jonathan Jennings and was elected Indiana's first lieutenant governor. In 1819, he ran against Jennings for governor and was soundly beaten.

During the time he was commissioner, Harrison lived with Matthias Nowland. Years later, Nowland's son wrote in his reminiscences of Harrison,

"He had no more hair on his head than there was on the palm of his hand, and wore a wig. I shall never forget the fright he gave my younger brother James. The morning after his arrival . . . he was out at the



Christopher Harrison

William H. English Collection,  
Indiana Historical Society.

well, washing, and had his wig off. James happened to discover the want of hair, and ran to my mother and told her, 'the Indians had scalped the man that came last night.' She did not fully understand until she stepped to the door and saw his bald head."

Sources: Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis*; Nowland, *Early Reminiscences*.

## General John Carr

General John Carr was born in Perry County, Indiana on April 9, 1793; his family moved to Clark County, Indiana in 1806.

His military career began with the Battle of Tippecanoe, November 7, 1811. During the War of 1812, he was made lieutenant of a company of United States Rangers. He served as brigadier general and major general of the Indiana Militia until his death.

He was clerk of Clark County, 1824-1830, and a presidential elector in 1824. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1831-1837 and 1839-1841. He died in 1845 in Clark County.

Source: *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1949* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 951.



# Surveying and platting the town

In the spring of 1821, Commissioner Christopher Harrison employed Elias P. Fordham and Alexander Ralston to survey and plat the town of Indianapolis so that a land sale could be held. Apparently, Ralston led the survey team since early Indianapolis histories give little credit to Fordham.

Ralston was well-qualified for his position. He had assisted Major L'Enfant with the survey of what is now the city of Washington, D.C. The plat of Indianapolis incorporated several elements

from the Washington plat.

Ralston's 1821 plat map of Indianapolis on page 5 shows a neatly laid out little town with wide, well-defined streets. According to Holloway, "The boundary streets, East, West, North and South, were not included in the original survey. The Commissioner [Harrison] seems to have thought that nobody would ever live on the outside of the last line of squares." Harrison was subsequently convinced to add them to the plat.

The map was, naturally, a

vision—a projection of what the town could be. Two quotations, provided below from early histories, give a more realistic picture of early Indianapolis.

Sources: Bolton, Nathaniel, *A Lecture Delivered before the Indiana Historical Society, on the Early History of Indianapolis and Central Indiana . . .* (Indianapolis: Austin H. Brown, Printer, 1853); Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis*; W. R. Holloway, *Indianapolis. A Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Railroad City . . .* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Journal Print, 1870); Nowland, *Early Reminiscences*; Sulgrove, *History*.

"The first inhabitants principally settled immediately on the bank of White river, and the lower or western part of the city. Many of their log cabins were erected before the town was laid off, and when the survey was made, their residences presented a singular appearance, as to location. Some were in the center of the lots, others in the streets, and all without the least regard to the streets or alleys" (Bolton, 8).

"Scattered cabins seemed to have dropped down with no order or purpose, thickening a little near the river, and thickening still more toward the East, but they marked no street except the line of Washington . . . . It was crowded with stumps and heaps of logs and limbs, which, in places, the close undergrowth of hazel, spice brush and pawpaw made impervious to all penetration" (Holloway, 15).

## Alexander Ralston

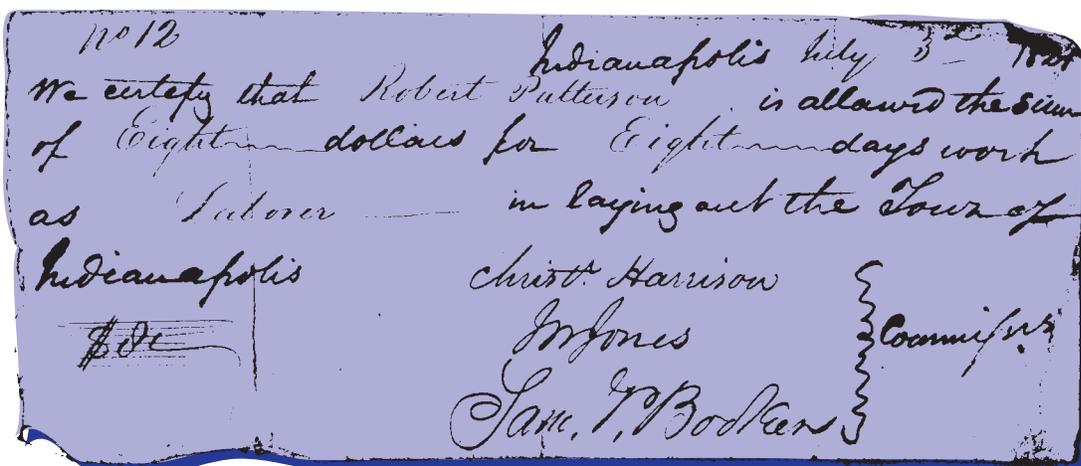
Ralston was born in Scotland. He came to Indianapolis in 1820 with his black housekeeper, Cheney Lively.

After he platted the town of Indianapolis, he made it his home. He was employed as the county surveyor. He died on January 5, 1827, at age fifty-six.

His obituary in the *Indiana Journal*, January 9, 1827 noted: "Mr. Ralston was successful in his profession, honest in his dealings, gentlemanly in his deportment, a liberal and hospitable citizen, and a sincere and ardent friend."

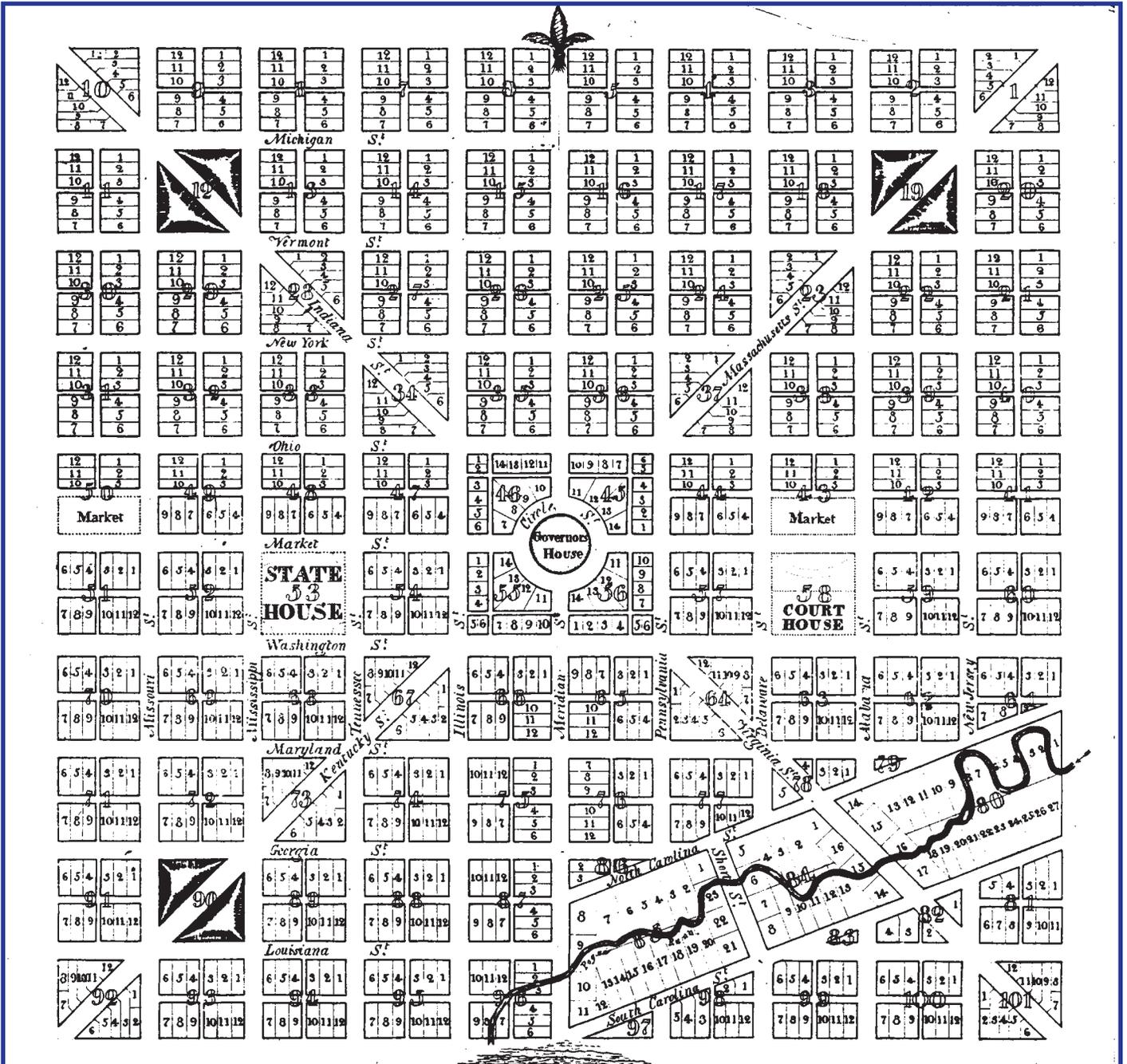
Source: Nowland, *Early Reminiscences*.

Workers who helped the surveying team were issued drafts for payment for their work. Robert Patterson, later elected a judge, was hired as a general laborer. Look carefully at the draft. How much was he paid per day?



Indianapolis Donation, Indiana State Archives.





*Notes.*

Washington Street is 120 feet wide.  
 Circle ..... 80  
 North & South Carolina Streets are 60.  
 Alleys are 30 & 15 feet wide.  
 Regular lots about on 30 feet alleys in  
 general, and have 67 1/2 feet front by  
 185 feet depth, content 1 acre.  
 Irregular lots generally contain 1/2 acre.

**PLAT  
 OF THE TOWN  
 OF  
 INDIANAPOLIS.**

Engraved & Published by H. Platt, Columbus, Ohio, Decr. 1821.

*Notes.*

The shaded squares No. 12, 19 & 90,  
 are reserved for religious purposes.  
 Every lot numbered 1, 5 & 9, are reserved  
 for some future sale.  
 Squares 45, 48, 55, 56, are called, to-  
 gether, "Governors Square".  
 White River is 1/4 mile west of the west  
 line of the town.





# Land sales begin

Corydon Indiana Gazette, September 20, 1821.

**INDIANAPOLIS.**  
*The second Monday in October next,*  
**THE LOTS IN THE TOWN OF INDIANAPOLIS,**  
**T**HIS town has been laid out under the authority of the State of Indiana, on the site located for its permanent seat of government, by Commissioners appointed for that purpose on the East bank of the West Fork of White River, in the centre of the state. It is situated on a high, dry; uninterrupted plane of several miles extent, perfectly free from inundation, marshes and ponds. The site of the town and the surrounding country is in a eminent degree beautiful and fertile and is probably the best body of land in the state.

The plan of the town is calculated to ensure the health comfort and convenience of its inhabitants, and occupies a space of one mile square—Good wholesome water may be had to the depth of 26 feet, in any part of it, in a sandy stratum. It is confidently expected that the great National turnpike road from Washington City to Missouri, will pass through Indianapolis and the seats of government of Ohio and Illinois. The conditions of the sale are liberal and are as follows:

"Sec. 6 Every purchaser of any lot or lots shall at the time of making such purchase, pay into the hands of the agent, one fifth part of the purchase money, the residue to be paid in four annual instalments; the purchaser in all cases to have a discount at the rate of 8 per cent per annum, for prompt payment on any instalment, for all monies paid for the purchase of lots."

## A Crowd Gathers

During the first week in October 1821 Indianapolis was overflowing with people. They had gathered for the opportunity to buy land in the new state capital.

The sale had been advertised since June 10, 1821. By law the commissioners had to announce the sale at least three months ahead of time in three newspapers. The advertisement to the left is a sample.

Sarah Fletcher, wife of Calvin Fletcher, wrote in her diary,

*October the 8th.* The sale of lots commenced near our house—a large concourse of people were present.

The four taverns were completely full. Many people stayed in private homes or camped out.

Peter Van Arsdale (1787-1857) was one of many who went to Indianapolis seeking to buy land. He wrote the following:

... during the summer 1821 the town of Indianapolis was Advertized for sale. about the first of October, a number of us concluded to attend that sale, accordingly we made up a larg company of the Smalls [?] Demotts &c. and we took a waggon to carry our provision and otherr lugage, we had a company of ten. six were connected with the waggon four rode on horsback and camp together every night . . .

## The Sale

The sale was held at Matthias Nowland's cabin, starting October 8, a cold and very

windy day. Major Thomas Carter was the auctioneer, and James M. Ray was the clerk.

Jesse McKay made the first purchase paying \$152.75 for lot three in square seventy.

The sale lasted a week. John Carr, the state agent in charge of the land sales, paid the highest price for any lot—\$572.00 for lot twelve in square fifty-seven.

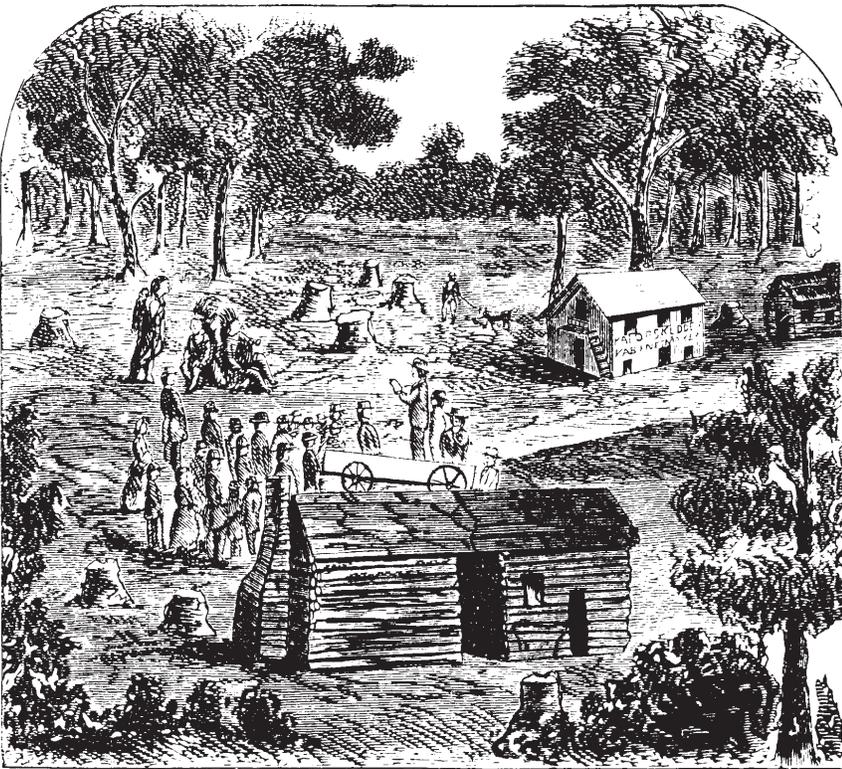
A total of three hundred and fourteen lots were sold for a total of \$35,596.25; \$7,119.25 was paid in cash.

It would take the next fifty years to sell all of the original donation land, with the last recorded receipt in 1871. The total amount received for the entire donation land was less than \$125,000.

Section twenty-three of the January 6, 1821 act specified that money received from the sale of lots would be used to erect public buildings. The money allowed for the construction of the clerk's office, the governor's mansion in the circle (now Monument Circle), a house and office for the state treasurer, the first Marion County courthouse, and the first state house. Part of the money went toward construction of the first state prison in Jeffersonville.

Sources: Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis*; Thornbrough, *Diary of Calvin Fletcher*; Nowland, *Early Reminiscences*; Peter Van Arsdale, *A History*. Written by Himself (handwritten manuscript), Peter Van Arsdale Collection, Indiana State Library, Indiana Division, Manuscripts.





This sketch, artist unknown, allegedly depicts the sale of lots at Matthias Nowland's cabin. Various primary sources, however, indicate that there were large crowds of people. The sketch, nonetheless, may give a sense of what the auction must have looked like.

### Good moral character needed

Corydon Indiana Gazette, November 8, 1821.

**Mathias R. Nowland**  
  
 Informs his friends & the public generally that he has opened a house of **Private Entertainment.**  
 In Indianapolis, where travelers and others may be accommodated as well as the country will afford. From his attention to the business; he hopes to share a portion of the public patronage.  
 Indianapolis, Oct. 12. 1821  
 4591.

Most likely, Nowland's tavern was full for the land sale. The drawing of the three-story brick house was apparently a stock drawing for the paper; Nowland's tavern was a log cabin.

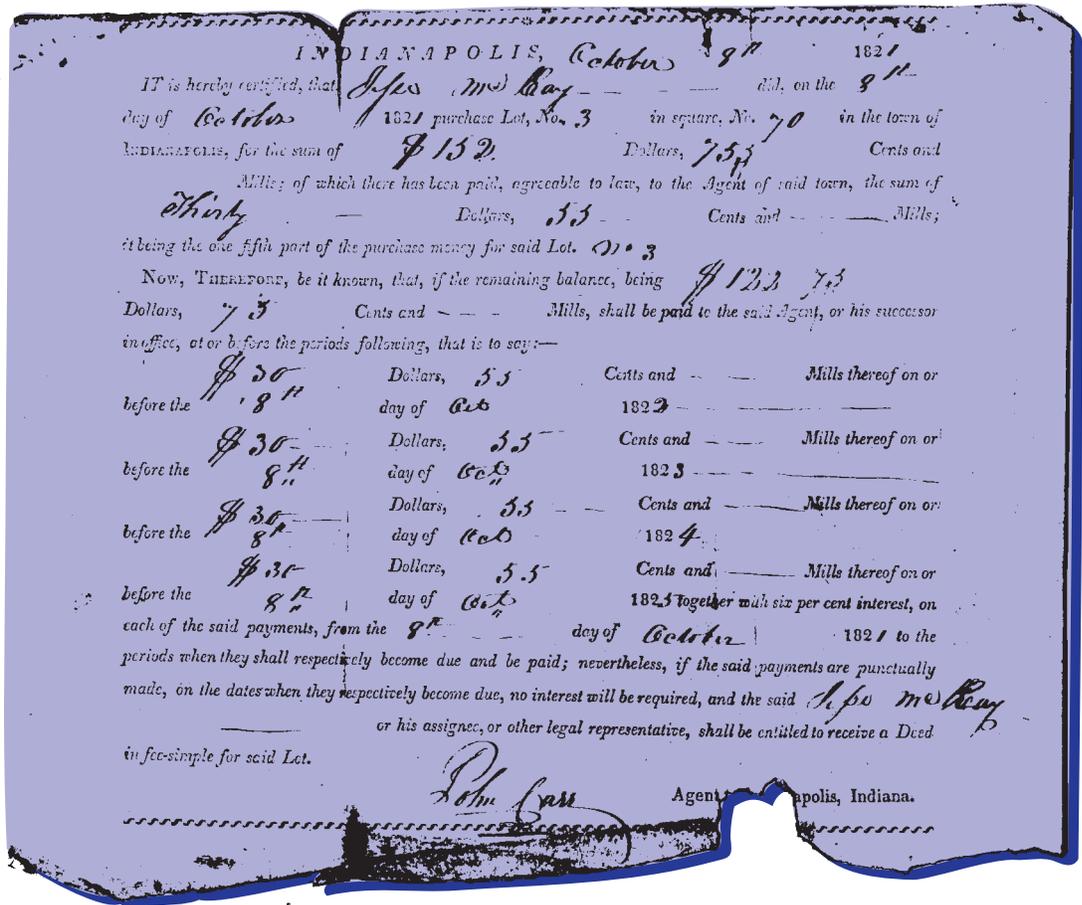
In compliance with the January 28, 1818 "Act to licence and regulate taverns," anyone operating a tavern was required to obtain a license from the county commissioners and pay a \$500 bond. They were also required to submit twelve certificates from "respectable house-holders" which attested to their "good moral character."

Nowland, like other tavern owners, was subject to many rules and regulations, such as not selling liquors to minors. He was also not allowed to sell on Sundays.

An act approved January 5, 1821 changed the authority to license taverns from county commissioners to the circuit courts. Tavern keepers were required to keep "at least two good beds and furniture" beyond family needs, and "a good stable well furnished with suitable stalls for at least four horses." Sources: Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis*, and *Laws of Indiana*, 1818, 1820-1821.

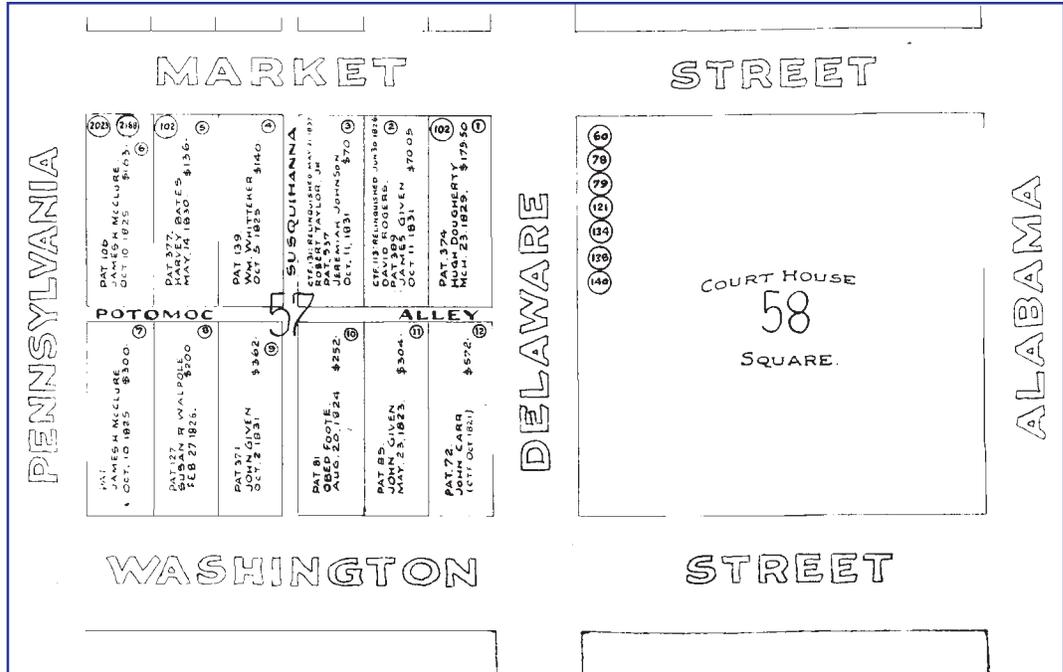
# Resources from Indiana State Archives

Jesse McKay's certificate of sale illustrates the process for purchasing land. By law, all purchasers of lots were required to put down one-fifth of the total due, and pay the rest in annual installments. Look carefully at McKay's certificate. What was his down payment? What was his annual installment payment? How many years was he given to pay off his lot? McKay actually sold the land soon after he purchased it. If McKay had made his last installment payment, he would have received a patent from the land agent. The patent would then have been taken to the county recorder's office. There he would have received a land deed proving legal ownership. If McKay failed to make his payments, the land could be taken away by the land agent and resold.



Indianapolis Donation, Indiana State Archives

This detail is from the Indianapolis Donation, Atlas of Selections, page 12. The lot purchased by John Carr, the state land agent for Indianapolis, was in a prime location, and he paid a high price for it. The front of his lot faced Washington Street, the main street of the town. The side of his lot faced the courthouse square, which was traditionally the center of business in county seats. Locate John Carr's lot on this map. Locate this detail and Carr's lot on the maps on pages 5 and 16.



Indianapolis Donation, Indiana State Archives



# Early residents of Indianapolis

As soon as Indianapolis was named the future site of the state capital, people began to migrate to the town. As the state capital, Indianapolis had the potential for businessmen and tradesmen to make money. Some early settlers, their professions, and when they arrived in Indianapolis are listed below.

Sources: Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis*; Nowland, *Early Reminiscences*; Earline Rae Ferguson, "In Pursuit of the Full Enjoyment of Liberty and Happiness: Blacks in Antebellum Indianapolis, 1820-1860," *Black History News & Notes*, No. 32, May 1988.

Indianapolis Gazette, March 1, 1823.

**Cabinet Making.**

The subscriber respectfully informs his friends, and the public in general, that he is now prepared to do any work in his line, at his shop on the State-House square, Washington street, Indianapolis. He has provided himself with workmen and good materials, and will at any time be ready to have his work examined by good judges.

**CALEB SCUDDER.**

February 15. 45  
N. B. The subscriber will receive, for cabinet work, good merchantable Cherry, Walnut and Poplar plank—also corn and Sugar, and will never refuse cash when offered.  
\* \* Cabinet work will be exchanged for a good work horse. C. S.

Newspaper advertisements are a rich resource. What can you learn about how business was conducted from this advertisement? When did Scudder arrive in Indianapolis (using the list below)?

## You Be the Historian

The list of early residents can reveal a great deal of historical information. The names allow for further research of specific individuals. The professions can provide many clues about early living and travel conditions.

- Define what each profession is. Use a dictionary to look up any you do not know. What clues does each profession provide about life in Indianapolis at the time?
- Check your own county histories. Are there early professions you can add?
- Compile a list of professions today by surveying your school or others in your town.
- Which of the early professions can still be found today? Which ones cannot be found? What new professions have you noted? What clues do your findings provide about life today?
- Where might some of the "old-fashioned" professions be preserved today?

### 1819

George Pogue—blacksmith  
Fabius M. Finch—lawyer

### 1820, Spring

John McCormick—tavern  
Robert Harding—farmer  
Jeremiah Johnson—farmer  
John Van Blaricum—farmer  
Jeremiah J. Corbaley—farmer  
Robert Barnhill—farmer  
Henry Davis—chairmaker  
Samuel Davis—chairmaker  
Isaac Wilson—miller  
Dr. Isaac Coe

### 1820, Summer

Kenneth A. Scudder—first drug store  
James J. McIlvain, Jr.—farmer  
William Townsend—miller

### 1820, Fall

Matthias Nowland—mason  
Dr. S. G. Mitchell  
Thomas Anderson—wagonmaker  
Alexander Ralston—surveyor  
Cheney Lively—housekeeper, first black resident  
Andrew Byrne—tailor  
Conrad Brussell—baker  
Ephraim Ensaw—black laborer

### 1820, Winter

James B. Hall—carpenter  
Michael Ingals—teamster  
Robert Wilmot—merchant  
Thomas Johnson—farmer  
Milo R. Davis—plasterer

### 1821

James Kittleman—shoemaker  
Andrew Wilson—miller  
Nathaniel Cox—carpenter  
Aaron Drake—first mail

### 1821, Spring

John McClung—preacher  
Alexander Russell—merchant  
Joseph C. Reed—first teacher  
David Mallory—black barber

### 1821, Summer

James Blake—teacher, businessman  
Eliakim Harding—farmer  
Mr. Lawrence—teacher  
Daniel Larkins—grocery  
Wilkes Reagan—butcher  
Obad Foote—lawyer  
O.P. Gaines—first Presbyterian preacher  
James Linton—millwright  
Amos Hanway—cooper  
James M. Ray—coach-lace maker  
Samuel Rooker—first painter

### 1821, Fall

Lismund Basye—became magistrate  
Calvin Fletcher—lawyer  
Caleb Scudder—cabinet-maker  
George Smith—first publisher  
James Scott—Methodist preacher  
James Paxton—militia officer  
George Myers—potter  
Nathaniel Bolton—first editor  
John Shunk—hatter  
Isaac Lynch—shoemaker  
Samuel Henderson—first postmaster  
Robert Patterson—became judge  
Harvey Gregg—lawyer

### 1821, Winter

Robert Wilmont—merchant  
Daniel Schaffer—merchant  
Daniel Yandes—first tanner  
Thomas Johnson—farmer



# Marion County is organized

Indianapolis Gazette, March 18, 1822.

## A Proclamation.

**BY** virtue of a command expressed in a writ of Election, to me directed by his excellency Jonathan Jennings, Governor of the State of Indiana, I, Hervey Bates, Sheriff of the county of Marion, in the State aforesaid do hereby make known to the qualified electors of the said county of Marion, that there will be an Election held in said county, on Monday the first day of April next, at the following places to wit

At the house of John Carr, in Indianapolis;

At the house of John Finch, near Conner's station;

At the house of James Page, in Strawtown;

At the house of John Berry, in Anderson's town;

And at the house of William M. Cartney, on Fall Creek:

Sheriff Hervey Bates proclaims Marion County's first election.

When the commissioners selected the site of Indianapolis in 1820, the site was in the midst of sparsely populated wilderness in a county (Delaware) that was not yet organized. In 1821, residents of Indianapolis had no services, their legal affairs had to be conducted in courts in another county, and they were unrepresented in the General Assembly.

In fact, according to the *Indianapolis Gazette*, January 20, 1824, there was concern that the governor would not sign the act creating Indianapolis as the seat of state government. The author, however, had confidence that the governor would not "hesitate to approve a measure so essential

and important to the interests of the state, merely on the ground of personal inconvenience to the officers of state, or of interest to the citizens of Corydon."

As the new state capital in 1825, the town would have to support many people and provide services comparable to the current state capital in Corydon. Creating a local government to insure a successful transition to the seat of state government, became a priority for residents of Indianapolis.

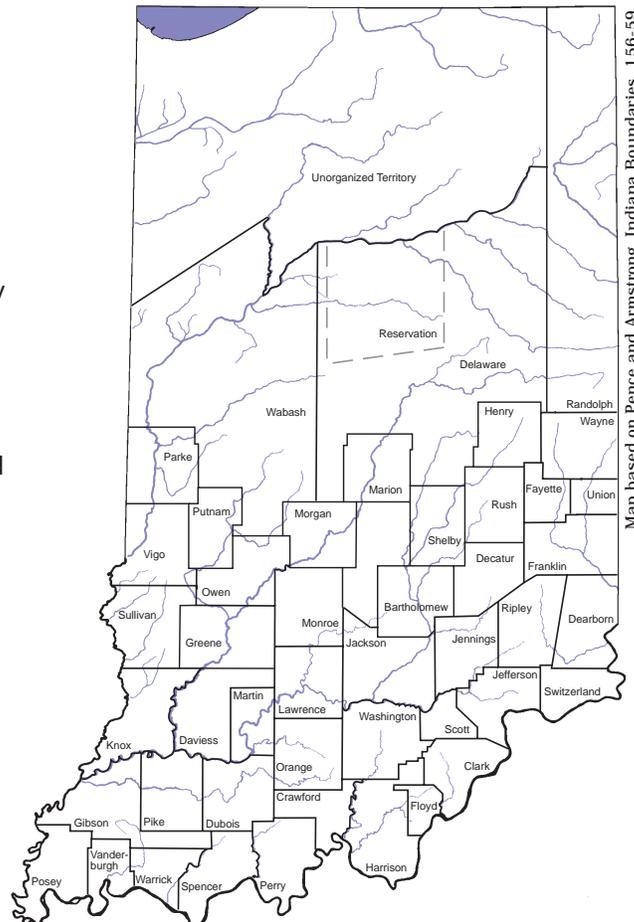
The timeline below indicates some major steps in that process of organization.

Sources : Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis; Laws of Indiana*, various years.

## The First Steps

- 1821** — December 31—Act creates Marion County and provides \$8,000 for a courthouse.
- 1822** — January 1—Governor appoints sheriff who calls election of county officials.
- 1822** — April 1—First election for Marion County officials.
- 1822** — April 15/16—First meeting of Marion County commissioners.
- 1822** — September 3—County commissioners award contract for courthouse for \$13,996 to John E. Baker and James Paxton.
- 1823** — January 7—Marion County first represented in General Assembly.
- 1824** — January 2—Act provides additional \$5,996 for Marion County courthouse.
- 1824** — January 20—Act establishes Indianapolis as permanent seat of state government.

This map shows Indiana's county boundaries at the end of December 1821. Compare this map to the map for 1820 in the March 1996 *TIH*, page 9.



Map based on Pence and Armstrong, *Indiana Boundaries*, 156-59.

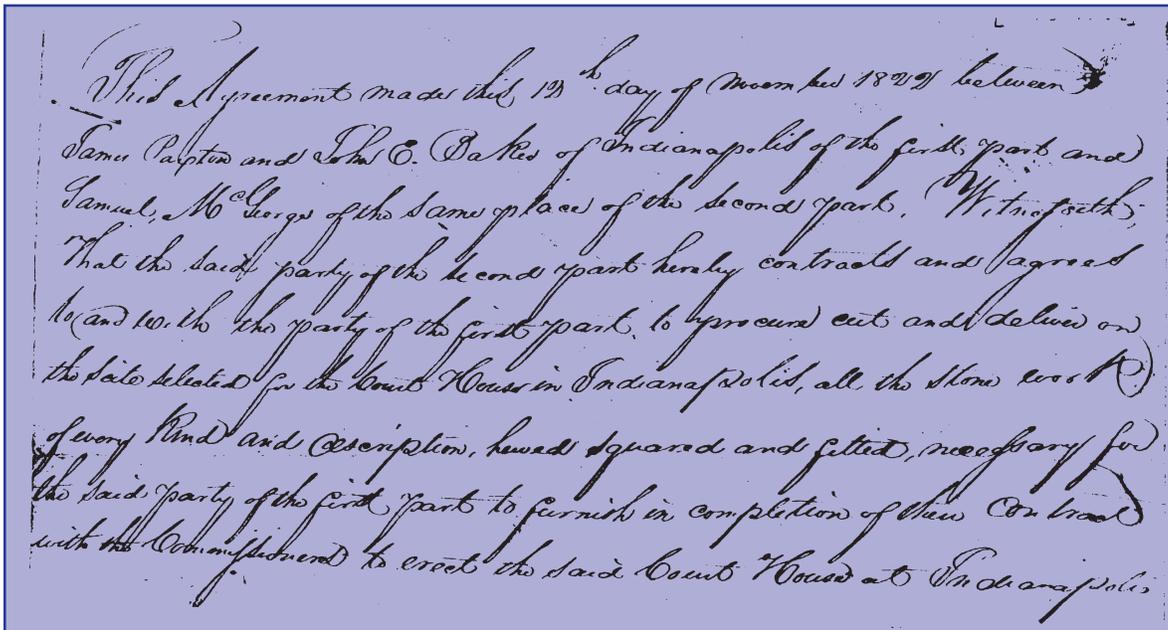


A drawing of the first Marion County Courthouse by Christian Schrader. Schrader was born in Indianapolis in 1842, and became interested in art as a young man. However, he did not pursue art as a profession. Instead, he became a merchant. In 1871 he opened a glassware shop on West Washington Street.

Schrader retired in 1909 and began to work on his sketches and drawings of early Indianapolis. These were donated to the Indiana State Library in 1930, ten years after Schrader's death. His delightful collection offers a rich visual history of early Indianapolis.

Source: Schrader, *Indianapolis Remembered*, 19-20.

This November 12, 1822 contract is for "all the stone work of every kind and description" for construction of the Marion County courthouse. By this contract, architects James Paxton and John E. Baker subcontracted the work with Samuel McGeorge for \$1,850.



Indiana State Library, Indiana Division, Manuscripts.

**LIST OF CANDIDATES.  
FOR ASSOCIATE JUDGES.**

James M-Ilvain,	John Smock,
Robert Patterson,	John M'Clung,
Eliakim Harding,	Wm. C. Blackmore

**CLERK.**

James M. Ray,	Milo R. Davis,
Morris Morris,	Thomas Anderson.
John W. Redding,	

**RECORDER.**

Alexander Ralston,	William Vandegriff,
James Linton,	Joseph C. Reed,
John Givens,	Aaron Drake,
William Townsend,	

**COMMISSIONERS.**

J. R. Crumbaugh,	William M'Cartney,
John T. Osborn,	John M-Cormack,
A. Hendricks,	A. B. M-Cord,
Robert Stockton,	Curtis Mallery,
George Buckner,	Samuel Morrow,
Thomas Chinn,	J. Allison,
Isaac Lynch,	Thomas Carter.

Candidates in Marion County's first election.  
Compare this list to the list of early residents on page 9.

**You Be the Historian**

- Investigate your county and local governments today. What services and functions do they perform for citizens? If you were just starting out to form a local government, what services would you establish first and why?
- Investigate the organizations and institutions that are part of your community today. If you were just establishing the community, which of these would you establish first and why?
- Investigate the early history of your community or county to learn how early settlers proceeded in building their communities.



# Government moves to Indianapolis

The following is excerpted from "Two of Indiana's Capitals," a handwritten manuscript by Colonel Samuel Merrill, in the Colonel Samuel Merrill Collection, Indiana State Library, Indiana Division, Manuscripts. The manuscript is not dated, but Merrill writes that he was born seven years after 1824 and was sixty-four at the time of the writing, circa 1895.

The text here is reproduced line for line, with original punctuation and spelling. The lines of dots indicate where text has been omitted.

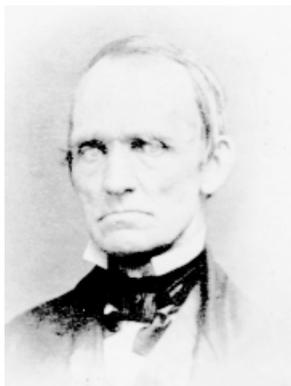
Colonel Merrill was the son of Treasurer of State Samuel Merrill. Since the move he describes took place seven years before the author was born, he apparently obtained his information from versions told by his family and others. It was, obviously, a momentous event for those who took part in the journey.

Merrill submitted his report on the move to the Indiana Senate on January 11, 1825. The final cost reported for the move was \$65.55. *Senate Journal*, 1825, p. 7.

*To the President of the Senate:*

SIR—In obedience to the act entitled "An act establishing a permanent seat of Government for the state of Indiana," and of the joint resolution respecting the furniture belonging to the state, at Corydon, I have the honour to state, that the following expenses have been incurred and paid for removing the public property, records, &c. from Corydon to Indianapolis:

To Messrs. Posey & Wilson for boxes,	\$7 56
To Mr. Lefler for one box,	0 50
To Scybert & Likens, for transportation of 3945 lbs. at \$1 90 per hundred,	74 95
To Jacob & Samuel Kenoyer, for transportation of one load,	35 06
	<hr/>
	\$118 07
Deduct for proceeds of sale of furniture at Corydon, Nov. 22nd, 1824,	52 52
	<hr/>
	\$65 55



Indiana State Library, Indiana Division, Photographs.

Samuel Merrill was treasurer of state until 1834, when he was appointed to organize the second State Bank of Indiana and its branches, serving as its president for approximately ten years. Nowland, *Early Reminiscences*.

.....  
It was a lovely day in the latter part of October 1824 when the State Treasurer who had charge of all there was movable belonging to Indiana, started from Corydon to the new seat of government.

His little family occupied a large covered wagon, & with them beside the documents & records, was the strong box containing about twenty five thousand Dollar.

Five powerful horses, four whit & the one in the lead a magnificent gray, driven by Mr. Seibert, drew the wagon through every mudhole through out the long journey without once stalling. Behind came another wagon drawn by two horses, & in this conveyance was the family of Mr. John Douglass, the State Printer. Tied behind this vehicle was a cow, invaluable for the milk she furnished, to the little pilgrims. There was a saddle horse ridden by Mr. Douglass.

Four men, two mothers, one beautiful girl of sixteen, one boy of eleven, & six little children.

.....  
The first days journey was eleven miles, & the place of entertainment at night was a small one room frame house. Frame dwellings were rare in the country, but the pioneer who built this, was wealthy enough to own a little sawmill, & cut the lumber himself. The men slept in the wagons, for the money had to be guar-

ded. Under the head of the Treasurer were two flint lock horse pistols, carefully loaded for robbers.

.....  
The floor of the little house where the families stayed was covered with slumberers . . . .

.....  
The three little girls who slept on the floor that night, still honor Indianapolis by making it their home . . . .

.....  
The road, if road you might call it, was so bad that at times the men had to take axes, & cut a way thro. the woods around the mudholes. Once the State Printers wagon stuck in the mire & would not come out, till all hands & all horses overcame its obstinacy.

After going or trying to go all day long, the travellers found at night they were only two miles & a half from their morning starting place.

.....  
Flour was very scarce, but at one house, the hostess as a great treat made biscuits for supper.

As she had been dyeing yarn, the blueing on her hands colored the dough, & gave the bread a streaked appearance. The grown folks did not seem to care for biscuits that night, but the children enjoyed them immensely.





At another place, all the cooking utensils the poor woman had was a deep skillet with an arched cover.

In the misfortunes that overtake us all in this life, the skillet had cracked & gone to pieces, so she turned the lid over, & made a skillet of it, in which she boiled the water for the rye coffee, & the sage tea, then baked the bread, then fried the meat, & everybody was happy.

Whenever the caravan came to a small hamlet like Columbus or Franklin, Mr. Seibert who was very proud of his team, would put immense sleigh bells in arches over the horses shoulders to give everybody to understand that something important was coming.

After ten days journey, it being early in November, as they approached Indianapolis, coming along the road now called South Meridian St. the happy teamster, feeling that this was the proudest day of his life, refusing to listen to the pleadings of the ladies to the contrary, decked the horses with the loud sounding bells, & sent

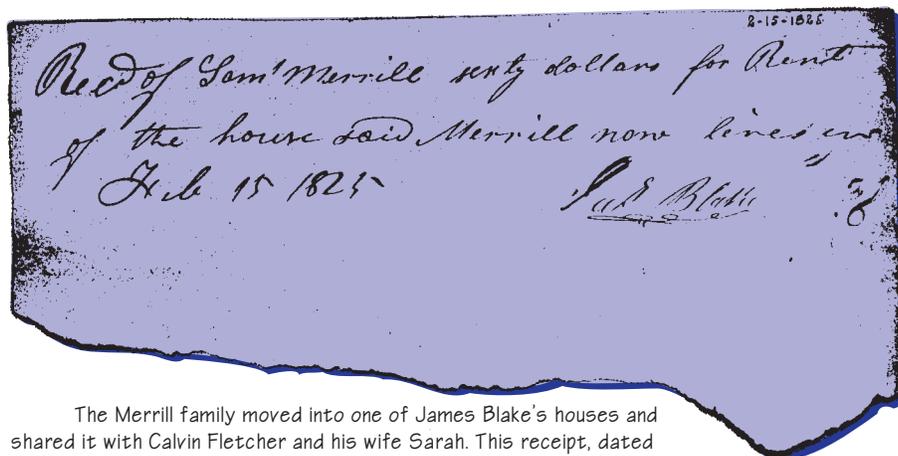
forward a country man, who chanced to be passing, to inform the people that the seat of government was coming. At the word, out poured most of the five hundred inhabitants boys, girls, men & women to see a sight that will never again be seen in Indiana.

When the teams stopped at Blake & Hendersons tavern . . . every citizen went home rubbing his hands & saying the fortune of Indianapolis is made.



Indiana State Library, Indiana Division, Photographs.

Colonel Samuel Merrill earned his military rank during the Civil War.



Indiana Historical Society Library, Samuel Merrill Collection.

The Merrill family moved into one of James Blake's houses and shared it with Calvin Fletcher and his wife Sarah. This receipt, dated February 15, 1825, indicates that Merrill paid \$60 rent for a year.

### First state building in Indianapolis

The building on the left is the first state structure, built to house the offices of the state treasurer and auditor. It was located on the corner of Washington and Tennessee (Capitol) streets. Samuel Merrill lived here with his family. The state auditor, William H. Lilley, had an office on the second floor.

Merrill's daughter, Jane Merrill Ketcham, wrote of her father's office: "The office was paved with

brick. Full one-third of it was covered with a vault, as we called it. It was of brick built up four feet, plastered and with an iron door on top. Up and down thro' this double locked door went boxes and bags of silver." Ketcham presented her reminiscences to her children, Christmas 1898.

Source: Indiana State Library, Indiana Division, Manuscripts.



Schrader, Indianapolis Remembered, 114.





# Behind the scenes

"Behind the scenes" presents some aspect of how the Bureau staff produces each issue of the magazine. The focus may be, for example, the research process, an interpretation problem, etc. It also enables us to thank our partners and demonstrate that research is a collaboration with often unexpected twists and turns.

Nowland, Sketches, frontispiece.



John H. B. Nowland was the son of Matthias Nowland, one of Indianapolis' founding fathers.

Over the several months of work on the two Indianapolis issues, our lead researcher has become engaged by the human element in the history of the city. Two early histories—Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis* and Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis*—were the starting point. Names of individuals whose efforts were responsible for the founding of Indianapolis kept appearing.

As research continued, John H. B.

Nowland's book, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis*, was located. Nowland had grown up in early Indianapolis and knew the

men and women who played major roles in the town's development. Using firsthand knowledge, he provided character sketches that turned names into people. The story of John Givan below is one example.

Months of daily research provided more resources and created connections with these people. It was exciting to locate, hold, and read documents written by or related to them. Images located put faces to names.

Individuals and their homes, offices, stores, and churches were placed in geographical perspective using the early detailed plats of Indianapolis.

Our researcher, working in the midst of what was 1820s Indianapolis, has a new perspective on the area. People who lived and events that happened over 175 years ago come vividly to mind when looking at the modern city.

This sense of excitement and discovery can be one reward of research. The information gathered provides historical context which is necessary to understand, interpret, and relate the past to the present.

The researcher is an active participant in the process, weighing the clues—factual evidence and personal perspectives—to produce a balanced story. Such active participation in the historical process can breathe life into what is often perceived to be an uninteresting subject in a school curriculum.

This store advertisement announced the partnership between James Givan and his son, John. The advertisement tells what is sold and where. Nowland provides some insight: "Mr. Givan's store was a perfect curiosity shop. In it could be found any article that utility or necessity might demand. A gentleman once inquired (in sport) for goose yokes, and to his surprise they were produced by dozens."

Nowland also reveals aspects of John's character, commenting on his life and using anecdotes about his business practices. Nowland often wrote in a sentimental style common to the period, appealing to the emotions of his readers. In the case of John Givan, Nowland was very frank: "His mind, from some cause, took an unfortunate turn some years since, from which resulted the loss of his property, or he might be today, as he once was, one of the prominent men of this city." Nowland, in closing, made a poignant plea for assistance for John, who was still living in 1870.

Source: Nowland, *Early Reminiscences*, 118-19.

**NEW GOODS.**

James Givan & Son

HAVE just received and now offer for sale, at the Store-House formerly occupied by John Givan,  
A FRESH SUPPLY OF

**Merchandise**

From the eastward:  
CONSISTING OF

Dry Goods,  
Hardware,  
Queensware,  
Groceries, &c.

—ALSO—  
A QUANTITY OF  
**SUGAR KETTLES.**

The highest price paid for BEES-WAX and GINSENG.  
N. B. CASH paid for FUR SKINS.  
Indianapolis, Feb. 18. 46

Indianapolis Indiana Gazette, March 1, 1823.





A Note Regarding Resources: Items are listed on this page that enhance work with the topic discussed. Some older items, especially, may include dated practices and ideas that are no longer generally accepted. Resources reflecting current practices are noted whenever possible.

# Selected resources

## Bibliography

- Dunn, Jacob Piatt. *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes*. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1910.

Although many early histories of Indianapolis exist, Dunn's excellent use of citations makes this a valuable book.

- Indianapolis Donation. *Atlas of Selections*, 1913.

This book, located in the Indiana State Archives, records land purchases in Indianapolis from 1821. It was compiled by George Pence, examiner of the State Board of Accounts, in 1913 in an attempt to get the state land records in order. It uses early plat maps of Indianapolis and records the date of sale of lots, giving the names of purchasers.

- *Indianapolis Remembered: Christian Schrader's Sketches of Early Indianapolis*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1987.

Schrader was an Indianapolis merchant during the mid-to-late 1800s. A gifted artist, he made beautiful pencil sketches of the early Indianapolis he remembered as a young man.

- Nowland, John H. B. *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis, with Short Biographical Sketches of Its Early Citizens, and of a Few of the Prominent Business Men of the Present Day*. Indianapolis: Sentinel Book and Job Printing House, 1870.

Nowland, son of one of the founding fathers of Indianapolis, provides details about some of the earliest residents of Indianapolis in his personal reminiscences.

- Nowland, John H. B. *Sketches of Prominent Citizens of 1876, with a Few of the Pioneers of the City and County Who Have Passed Away*. Indianapolis: Tilford & Carlon, Printers, 1877.

An expansion of Nowland's 1870 *Early Reminiscences*.

- Pence, George, and Nellie C. Armstrong. *Indiana Boundaries: Territory, State, and County*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1933; reprint, 1967.

Considered the standard reference for legal boundaries of Indiana from territorial days to 1933.

- Sulgrove, B. R. *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana*. Philadelphia: L. H. Everts & Co., 1884.

History of early Indianapolis with sketches and photographs of many early residents.

- Thornbrough, Gayle, ed. *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher*, Vol. 1, 1817-1838. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972.

Fletcher, one of the founding fathers of Indianapolis, gives a detailed day-to-day account of life in the city with many of its earliest and most prominent citizens.

## Other Selected Resources

- Barnhart, John D., and Donald F. Carmony. *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth*. 4 vols. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1954; 2 vols. reprint, Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1979.

Excellent general resource on Indiana's history up to 1950.

- Barnhart, John D., and Dorothy L. Riker. *Indiana to 1816: The Colonial Period*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau and Indiana Historical Society, 1971.

A standard resource.

- Bodenhamer, David J., and Robert G. Barrows, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Comprehensive reference on Indianapolis history.

- Johnson, Oliver. *A Home in the Woods: Pioneer Life in Indiana: Oliver Johnson's Reminiscences of Early Marion County*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.

Account of everyday life in early Indianapolis, first published by the Indiana Historical Society in 1951.

- Walsh, Justin E. *The Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly, 1816-1978*. Indianapolis: The Select Committee on the Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly in cooperation with the Indiana Historical Bureau, 1987.

Provides useful early history of General Assembly and legislators.

## Selected Student Resources

- Beekman, Dan. *Forest, Village, Town, City*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1982.

The evolution of the city from small village to metropolis is told through limited text and delightful illustrations.

- Henry, Joanne Landers. *A Clearing in the Forest: A Story About A Real Settler Boy*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1992.

Indianapolis in the 1830s is depicted in this fictional account based on the Calvin Fletcher diaries.

- Henry, Joanne Landers. *Log Cabin in the Woods: A True Story about a Pioneer Boy*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1988.

Oliver Johnson's recollections of life in early Marion County rewritten for intermediate readers.

- Howe, Daniel Wait. *Making a Capital in the Wilderness*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1908.

A brief and readable history of early Indianapolis based on primary sources.

- Mallett, Ann. *A Child's History of Indianapolis*. Indianapolis: The Indiana State Museum Shop, 1985.

An interesting publication, originally published in 1973.





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### Occupied Areas of Early Indianapolis

This map shows the pattern of settlement in Indianapolis' first fourteen years. Early settlers (1821) lived near, or on, White River.

By 1823, settlement was focused farther east. Sulgrove, *History of Indianapolis* provides an explanation: "Towards the end of the summer and during the fall epidemic remittent and intermittent fevers and agues assailed the people, and scarcely a person was left untouched."

The effect of the epidemic of 1821, on the settlement was to force it back from the river, and extend it eastward past the Circle and Court-House Square along Washington Street" (30-31).

By 1835, much of the original mile square plat remained unsold.

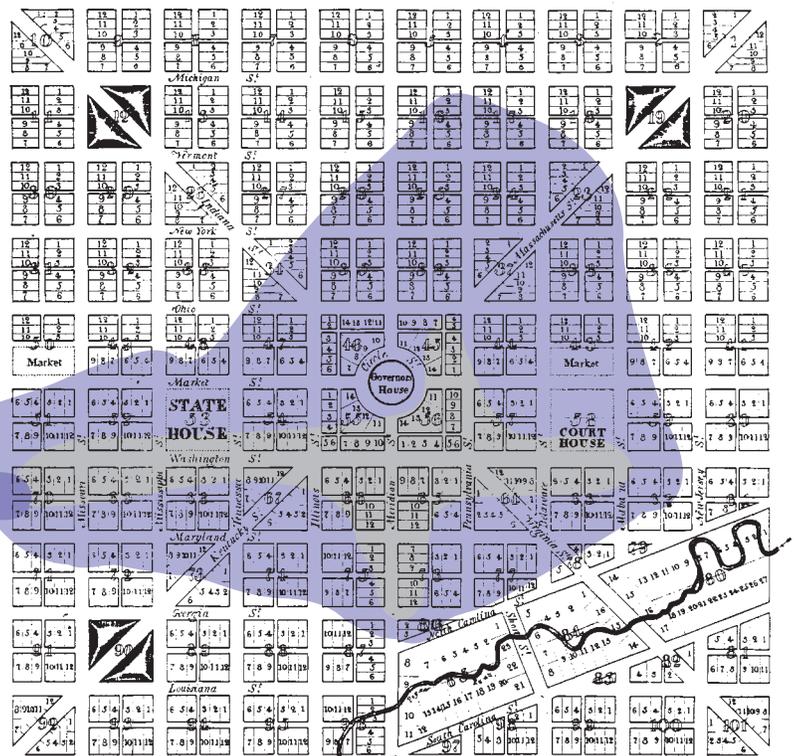
#### Indianapolis Population

- 1820 15 to 20 families
- 1823 600 - 700 people
- 1824 100 families
- 1826 720 people
- 1827 1,066 people
- 1830 1,500 people
- 1835 1,683 people

Sources: Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis*; Sulgrove, *History*.

White River

- 1821—
- 1823—
- 1835—



Map adapted from: Ignatius Brown, Chart of Indianapolis showing outlines of population; and Occupied Areas of Early Indianapolis. Both maps are located in the Indiana State Library, Indiana Division.

